

Remarks

By the foregoing amendment, claims 34, 36-38, 40-41, 43, 45-50, 53, 55-57, 59-66 are amended, claims 35, 36, 38, 47, 48, and 50 are withdrawn, and claims 39, 51 and 52 are cancelled. Applicant respectfully submits that no new matter was added by the amendment, as all of the amended matter was either previously illustrated or described in the drawings, written specification and/or claims of the present application. Entry of the amendment, and favorable consideration thereof, is earnestly requested. Claims 34, 37, 40-46, 49, and 53-66 are currently pending.

Claim rejections – 35 USC § 112

The Examiner has rejected claims 46 and 66 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In particular, the Examiner stated that the phrase “said inner cable” in claim 46 lacks antecedent basis, and that the phrase “auxiliary devices” in claim 66 is unclear. Applicant hereby amended the claims in a way that Applicant believes overcomes the Examiner’s rejections. Applicant also amended the claims to correct several informalities.

Claim rejections – 35 USC § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 34, 39-44, and 54-64 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Reineke (DE 19726408) in view of Gish (US 3,837,428), and further in view of Smith, Jr. (US 4,424,884). The Examiner has also rejected claims 34, 37, 43, and 49 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Reineke in view of Gish, and further in view of Grant (US 4,602,698). The Examiner has further rejected claims 43-46 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Reineke in view of Ishii (US 4,738,335), and further in view of Gish. Finally, the Examiner has rejected

claims 64-66 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Reineke in view of Gish, and further in view of Azran (US 2004/0168854). Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections in light of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

Claim 34, as amended, recites a method of servicing outer components of a wind turbine with a work platform, including the steps of positioning the work platform at the wind turbine tower, connecting the work platform to an upper part of the wind turbine with at least one cable, raising the work platform with the cable and a cable winder to a position of use, and holding the work platform to a side of the wind turbine tower by directly gripping the tower with a holder comprised in the work platform. Claim 34 has been also amended to recite the step of moving the work platform horizontally by extracting or retracting a horizontal forcer of the work platform. This is an important feature of the present invention because it allows workers to position the work platform at any adjacent position outside the wind turbine, such as near one of the wind turbine blades, and to accommodate different distances between the tower and the blade.

Claim 43, as amended, recites a work platform for servicing outer components of a wind turbine, having at least one cable connecting the work platform with an upper part of the wind turbine, a cable winder winding said at least one cable, and a gripper for directly holding the work platform to the tower. Claim 43 has been further amended to recite that the gripper comprises at least one holding arm including a base arm section, an inner arm section, and an outer arm section, wherein the inner arm section and the outer arm section are pivotally connected and controlled by a holding arm actuator in at least one direction. Such design of the holding arms makes it possible to adapt the arm

sections to the inclination of the wind turbine tower regardless of the size of the inclination and also to grip the tower at different heights.

To establish prima facie obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. *In re Royka*, 490 F.2d 981, 180 USPQ 580 (CCPA 1974). Claims 34 and 43, as well as all claims dependent therefrom, are not unpatentable over the cited prior art references because none of these references, alone or when properly combined, disclose at least a work platform (1) having a gripper comprising at least one holding arm including a base arm section, an inner arm section, and an outer arm section, wherein the inner arm section and the outer arm section are pivotally connected and controlled by a holding arm actuator in at least one direction, and 2) capable of moving horizontally by extracting or retracting a horizontal forcer of the work platform.

Reineke discloses a work platform for servicing a wind turbine. The work platform includes a platform 10 moving vertically along cables 7 between an anchoring device and a wind turbine tower. (Fig. 1). The platform 10 has a cutout section 11 corresponding to a profile of a rotor blade 2. (Fig. 5). When the platform moves upwards, the rotor blade, positioned parallel to the tower in the direction of the tower foot, projects into the cutout.

However, although Reineke generally relates a work platform for servicing outer part of a wind turbine, this reference fails to disclose many important features of the present invention. As acknowledged by the Examiner, Reineke does not disclose or teach a cable winder for winding at least one cable, and a gripper for directly holding the work platform to the tower. (Office Action, p. 2). Additionally, Reineke fails to disclose

that the work platform is capable of moving horizontally by extracting or retracting a horizontal forcer of the work platform, as recited in claim 34, as amended. Further, this reference clearly fails to disclose a gripper comprising at least one holding arm including a base arm section, an inner arm section, and an outer arm section, wherein the inner arm section and the outer arm section are pivotally connected and controlled by a holding arm actuator in at least one direction, as recited in claim 43, as amended.

Gish discloses a safety scaffold with electromagnets for holding the scaffold to the building under construction. The scaffold includes a platform 10, electromagnets 20 and 22 for holding the platform to the structural members, electric power winches 58 and 60, and winch cables 62 and 64 connected to the winches for elevating and lowering the scaffold. (Fig. 1). However, Gish does not teach a gripper comprising at least one holding arm including a base arm section, an inner arm section, and an outer arm section, wherein the inner arm section and the outer arm section are pivotally connected and controlled by a holding arm actuator in at least one direction. Also, Gish fails to disclose that a work platform can be moved horizontally by extracting or retracting a horizontal forcer of the work platform.

Smith, Jr. discloses an emergency rescue system comprising a rescue gondola suspended alongside the exterior face of the building by a suspension cable. (Fig. 1). The gondola includes hydraulically extensible and retractable suction cups 137 for temporary engagement to the building. (Col. 9, lines 16-21). The gondola further includes a wheel 150 connected to the distal end of a hydraulic ram 152 beneath the floor of the gondola.

However, the Smith, Jr. reference fails to disclose a gripper comprising at least one holding arm including a base arm section, an inner arm section, and an outer arm section, wherein the inner arm section and the outer arm section are pivotally connected and controlled by a holding arm actuator in at least one direction. Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's assertion that Smith, Jr. discloses the gripper of the present invention. The suction cups 137 disclosed in this reference clearly cannot be equated with the holding arms having different sections, wherein the sections are pivotally connected and are capable of gripping the wind turbine tower at different heights and inclinations, as recited by claim 43, as amended.

Smith, Jr. also fails to disclose that a work platform can be moved horizontally by extracting or retracting a horizontal forcer of the work platform. The Examiner points to the wheel 150 and the ram 152 of Smith, Jr. in support of his argument that this reference discloses the forcing element of the present invention. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Smith, Jr. expressly teaches that the wheel 150 is engageable with the exterior surface of the building when the ram 152 is extended, and that it provides a rolling surface between the building and the gondola to facilitate elevational adjustment of the gondola position. (Col. 9, lines 39-44). Thus, Smith, Jr. clearly fails to disclose a horizontal forcer that allows for horizontal movement of the work platform by extracting or retracting the forcer, as recited by claim 34, as amended.

Grant discloses a hunting chair for elevating hunters and animals into trees. The hunting chair includes a hollow frame carrying a bracket 18. A reel 38 is rotatably mounted in the bracket, a cable 58 is attached to the reel, and foot pedals 44, 46 are attached to the reel for rotating the reel and winding the cable to elevate the chair into

the tree. The chair further includes a chain 112 to be wrapped around a tree trunk to prevent any free fall of the device.

However, the hunting chair of Grant is clearly a very different device, and it does not disclose many important features of the present invention. For example, Grant fails to teach that the chair is capable of moving horizontally by extracting or retracting a horizontal forcer. Applicant further disagrees with the Examiner's argument that the Grant reference discloses a gripper comprising a holding arm, as claimed. Clearly, the simple chain taught by Grant that is used to wrap around the tree trunk to hold the chair in place cannot be equated with the holding arm including a base arm section, an inner arm section, and an outer arm section, wherein the inner arm section and the outer arm section are pivotally connected and controlled by a holding arm actuator in at least one direction, as recited in the present application.

The Ishii reference discloses a scaffolding system comprising wall hooks provided on the top portion of a building and hanging stages suspended from the hooks by means of first cables. The scaffolding system further includes protective nets that can be stretched between the wall hooks and the hanging stages, and means for lifting and lowering the protective nets by means of second cables. However, Ishii clearly fails to disclose or teach moving the work platform horizontally by extracting or retracting a horizontal forcer of the work platform, and a gripping element comprising at least one holding arm including a base arm section, an inner arm section, and an outer arm section, wherein the inner arm section and the outer arm section are pivotally connected and controlled by a holding arm actuator in at least one direction.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that none of the cited references, alone or in combination, disclose, teach or even suggest at least the above-discussed features of claims 34 and 43, and that these claims, as well as all claims dependent therefrom, would not have been obvious in view of the cited references. Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims, namely claims 34, 37, 40-46, 49, and 53-66, are patentable over the references of record, and earnestly solicits allowance of the same. Applicant further respectfully requests that the non-elected claims 35, 36, 38, 47, 48, and 50 be rejoined and examined because the generic claims 34, 42-46, 53-58, and 61-66 are patentable over the cited references.

Respectfully submitted,

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